



Various editions of the Communist Manifesto

## Bourgeois, Proletarians and Communists

The [Communist Manifesto](#) was written in London by Dr Karl Marx when he was 29, with the help of his 27-year-old friend Frederick Engels, and it was published in January or February of 1848. It has been a “best-seller” ever since, is constantly republished, and is always in print.

### Bourgeois and Proletarians

Marx and Engels saw the new masters, the formerly slave-owning but now capitalist bourgeoisie, also known as burghers, or burgesses, that had originally grown up in the

towns under feudal rule, and had by then in some places taken over from the feudal lords by revolution.

Marx and Engels were already convinced that sooner or later, this bourgeoisie was going to be overthrown by the class of working proletarians (i.e. free citizens owning nothing but their Labour-Power) that the bourgeoisie had brought into existence.

Commissioned to write the Manifesto by the Communist League, Marx and Engels fell behind the agreed deadline, but came through with a magnificent text published just prior to the February, 1848 events in Paris - events which brought the proletariat as actors on to the stage of history to an extent that had never been seen before, thoroughly vindicating Engels and Marx.

The timing was great. The text turned out to be a classic to such an extent that every line of it is memorable. The first two parts ("Bourgeois and Proletarians", and "Proletarians and Communists") are given in the attached two files.

Short though it is, the Manifesto is so rich and so compressed as to be saturated with meaning and practically impossible to summarise. So without summarising, here are some of the most extraordinary sentences of the first section of the Manifesto:

*The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.*

*Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other - bourgeoisie and proletariat.*

*The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.*

*All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify.*

*All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind.*

*The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.*

### **Proletarians and Communists**

The second part of the Communist Manifesto contains statements about the Communist Party, about the family, about religion, and frank statements about the bourgeoisie.

It is included here with this set of readings of Marx's Capital,

Volume 1, particularly because it shows, within the broadest possible context, the centrality of the relations of production that create and sustain the effect known as capital, which then in turn defines everything else in bourgeois society.

It also looks forward to the way that society can be changed yet again, and thus serves to remind us that Marx's work is always intentional, and is never merely empirical, descriptive or disinterested.

*"The average price of wage labour is the minimum wage, i.e., that quantum of the means of subsistence which is absolutely requisite to keep the labourer in bare existence as a labourer,"* wrote Marx and Engels, already making a great step forward from Marx's "Wage Labour and Capital" that had been published in the previous year, 1847.

*"But does wage labour create any property for the labourer? Not a bit. It creates capital, i.e., that kind of property which exploits wage labour, and which cannot increase except upon conditions of begetting a new supply of wage labour for fresh exploitation."*

*"...a vast association of the whole nation... in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."*

- The above serves to introduce the original reading-text - Marx's and Engels' 1848 "Communist Manifesto", [Part 1](#) and [Part2](#).
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